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ABSTRACT

Evaluation by mandate, stemming either from legislative statute or action of the State education agency, is a growing development. Such mandates, however, do not necessarily stipulate the precise form of evaluation. It is therefore not surprising that traditional procedures outnumber newer approaches because school administrators, supervisors, and teachers are accustomed to viewing appraisal as a one-day rating process. However, it is more sensible to design evaluation procedures that call for performance objectives, specify a cooperative plan of action to achieve these goals, engage in both self-evaluation and evaluator assessments, and conduct a conference between teacher and evaluator to discuss implications of the evaluations and make plans for the future. (Author/WM)

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INVOLVEMENT - A KEYWORD IN A PERFORMANCE EVALUATION PROGRAM

by George B. Redfern

Introduction

It is significant that I have an opportunity to talk to superintendents, supervisors, principals, personnel specialists, school business officials, and counselors because the kind of evaluation I believe in is one that requires broadly-based involvement. If we are to make performance evaluation more than an inspectional process, of dubious value either to evaluatee or evaluator, there must be a sharing of involvement in the process. I, therefore, welcome the opportunity to talk with you about the nature of that involvement.

Status of Performance Evaluation

Evaluation by mandate, stemming either from legislative statute or action of the state education agency, is a growing development.

California, Florida, Oregon, South Dakota, Washington and Kansas are states that have enacted laws which, among other things, require some form of performance appraisal. Hawaii, Virginia and West Virginia have achieved the same result through initiatives of their state departments of education. Other states are in the process of requiring school systems to redesign, develop, and/or implement more systematic procedures in evaluation. Arizona, Pennsylvania, Nevada, and Texas typify states that are considering some forms of mandated evaluation. Obviously, still other states may be contemplating similar action because movement in this direction is accelerating.

It should be understood, however, that legal or administra-

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tive mandates do not necessarily stipulate the precise form of evaluation. In fact, those states that have already acted have taken a wide variety of approaches. For the most part, all that is mandated is the necessity for school systems to appraise their employees. The methods of doing so are determinations for local educational agencies. Frequently, the statutes or regulations require each school system to file its evaluation plan and procedures with the state department of education. It is not surprising that traditional procedures outnumber newer approaches because school administrators, supervisors, and teachers are so accustomed to viewing appraisal as a one-day rating process. Though it is difficult to initiate changes, the need for appraisal overhaul is long overdue. This is why evaluation by objectives and similar approaches are encouraging developments.

Traditional Procedures

Appraisal procedures have gone through developmental stages. Trait rating purported to indicate quantity and kinds of qualities necessary for successful performance despite the fact that ratings often reflected biases of evaluators more than qualities of practioner accomplishment.

Rating of personal traits was supplanted by lists of characteristics or descriptive statements of behaviors deemed essential by supervisors as manifestations of successful achievement. Practioners were usually classified into categories labeled outstanding, strong, average, weak or unsatisfactory. Even though inaccuracies in this sorting process were often glaring, the practice of categorizing the performance of individuals still persists as hundreds of appraisal procedures will attest.

A most recent trend is the development of job descriptions as the starting point in the appraisal process. It seems logical to assume that if a complete job description is written, delineating the full range of an individual's duties and responsibilities, the appraisal of his or her performance can take place logically and accurately. Inherent in this assumption is the necessity for the evaluator to be fully familiar with all aspects of the practioner's job content and to have monitored his or her performance sufficiently to give a valid assissment of its quantity and quality. The fact is, however, that his rarely occurs. Judgments usually have to be made on insufficient data. Guesswork contaminates assessments. Educational evaluators seldom experience the luxury of as reasonable evaluator-evaluatee ratios as their counterparts in business and industry. Lack of time and work overloads in the number of evaluatees per evaluator, put the latter at a distinct disadvantage. Job descriptions readily become obsolete either by job modification initiated by supervisors or by practitioners themselves. Evaluators must be aware of these possibilities if they plan to use job descriptions as the basis for assessing professional services.

Another approach is to develop job standards as the basis for appraising performance. Position expectancies are stated so as to describe exemplary accomplishment. The practitioner strives to attain the quality level each standard stipulates. Appraisal measures the extent to which performance attains the standard. In order to facilitate the work of evaluators, indicators of quality are often developed as subpoints under each standard. Evaluators, in monitoring the performance of the practitioner, look for these indicators as evidence that the standards are being met.

School systems are in various stages in applying these appraisal procedures. Most are still using some form of rating. Traditional techniques predominate.

Improvement is a Cooperative Endeavor

It makes more sense to design evaluation procedures which call for performance objectives, specify a cooperative plan of action to achieve these goals, engage in both self-evaluation and evaluator assessments, and conduct a conference between teacher and evaluator to discuss implications of the evaluations and makes plans for the future.

Teachers Won't Automatically Oppose Evaluation

It is often argued that it is futile to institute a program of teacher evaluation which stresses improvement through performance objectives fulfillment and assessment because teachers will oppose it. Quite the contrary. Teachers are disillusioned about the usefulness of many existing rating systems. They feel uncertain--and sometimes threatened--about rating procedures which are administratively designed, instituted and implemented and which put them in a passive role. They do not feel these procedures stimulate improvement. They are convinced that most rating systems--at best--are neutral. At worst, they may be even detrimental. So, it makes sense to overhaul evaluation processes to correct the deficiencies. If this is done and teachers are made partners in the process, opposition can be converted into support. At least, it is worth a try.

Principals' Problems

It is not realistic to expect principals to be expert raters of performance in all areas of teacher specialization. Yet, this is the expectation in most rating programs. Teachers are dubious about the capability of principals to be effective raters in so many aspects of teaching performance. Principals--on the whole--are equally unsure about the wisdom of requiring them to rate all elements of teaching performance. It is more useful to change the role of the principal from a rater to a diagnostician, a coach, a counselor, a helper, an expediter, and a partner of the teacher in carrying out a cooperative program of improvement.

Role of Supervisors and Instructional Specialists

Traditionally, instructional specialists have been reluctant to evaluate teachers because they fear in doing so they may weaken or destroy the rapport they feel should exist between teacher and supervisor in the supervisory relationships. It doesn't make sense, however, to neutralize these important staff members in carrying out the evaluation process. They have important expertise to contribute in helping make performance evaluation more productive. What needs to be done is to design ways to use their talents without jeopardizing their supervisory relationships. This can be done. For instance, instructional specialists may act in a consulting role, advising both the teacher and the evaluator. A cooperative, consulting role, in fact, capitalizes upon their prime skills and knowhow.

Peer Comparisons

One of the strengths of performance objectives evaluation is the opportunity for the individual to compete against himself. It has never made much sense to use evaluation to compare one teacher's performance with another as the prime purpose of the process. Too much time and energy have been expended in trying to classify teachers into too many categories through rating procedures, e.g., outstanding, strong, average, below average, and unsatisfactory performance. It is preferable to help teachers identify both strengths and weaknesses, fix on some specific performance objectives, work toward their achievement, and assess the results. The goal is to improve performance to become a better teacher this year than last. Peer comparisons are a lot less important than personal and professional improvement.

Evaluation Will Not Solve All Problems

Unfortunately, many people have unrealistic and unwarranted expectations as to what performance evaluation can accomplish. Some want to use it as the basis for getting rid of marginal and unsatisfactory personnel. Others hope to use it to institute differential pay. Still others hope it will silence the public clamor for accountability. Some want to be able to say "yes, we have an evaluation program." Many see it as a means to improve performance. Too many hope it will be the solution for a cluster of problems. To expect an evaluation program to do all these things is foolhardy. It is only a means to an end. It provides information which can be used to plan a program of improvement. It may or may not promote high morale. That will depend upon the quality of the program, its purposes and its

outcomes. It is better to use evaluation as a tool for better supervision and administration. To regard it as a miracle producer is to misunderstand its mission and potential.

Variability in Education

Size and complexity of school systems dictate variability in plans of evaluation. Admitting this fact, there is a basic kind of evaluation which can be adjusted to widely differing types of schools. It is amenable to adaptation. It can be made to suit large and small systems. This concept of performance evaluation is relatively simple. It is based upon the following premises: That

--the teacher understands his duties and responsibilities. He is aware of what is expected from him.

--some performance tasks are more important and crucial than others. Key performance objectives can be agreed upon and made the focus of teacher-administrator effort during the year.

--job performance can be related to these objectives.

--evaluation can measure the extent to which objectives have been achieved.

--performance improvement is the object of evaluation.

Emphasis in Evaluation

If improved performance is to be achieved, the evaluation process will put a premium upon the teacher and evaluator:

--understanding the objects of evaluation

--accepting the responsibilities inherent in the process

--sharing in the establishment of promising job objectives

--being willing to look realistically and critically at job performance

--providing and accepting supervisory assistance

--being willing to accept changes that may improve performance

Evaluation can have several results. The most important product is a higher level of teacher performance and improved educational services for youngsters. A second dividend is having current records and evaluative data which will give a more accurate picture of the status of teaching performance. A third yield--perhaps the most significant--is commitment to the importance of being evaluative-minded in the performance of duties and responsibilities. A good evaluative program can and will yield dividends both to the individual and to the school system. Most of all, it can promote a higher quality-level of educational service.

Teacher competence is the most important factor in quality education. Its nurture is properly the responsibility of the teacher, principals, supervisors and other related personnel in the system. A unity of effort is required. No one element is adequate if it stands alone.

The primary objective of performance evaluation is to stimulate, to upgrade, and to improve the performance of the individual. It should be conceived and developed on the premise that there is a content and a discernable range of expectations which a school system has for its staff members.

It is further predicted upon the assumption that in identifying broad areas of responsibility, the individual, in cooperation with his evaluator, will be able to identify specific objectives which can become the object of conscious and deliberate effort for improvement. The evaluation program, therefore, focuses upon specific objectives and, for a given period of time, the individual is evaluated in terms of these objectives.

There is implied in all of this the proposition that every individual is capable of some improvement and that the chances of that improvement's taking place are enhanced if there is a definite identification of what ought to be improved, a conscious effort made to achieve the improvement, and a systematic evaluation of the results achieved.

Saying it another way is that a person can become what he would like to be if given opportunity and encouragement. The great German philosopher Goethe probably put it best when he wrote: "If you treat people as they are, they will remain as they are. If you treat them as they ought to be and should be, they will become what they ought to be and should be."

Human relations issues are constantly present in the school setting. Teachers may be problems to principals and vice versa. Most problems, however, are capable of solution. Satisfactory accommodations can usually be worked out provided there is mutual good will and determined effort to find effective solutions. Understandings can usually be found short of "personality surgery" upon either the teacher or the evaluator. More effective teacher-evaluator relationships

should lay stress upon the following objectives:

--cooperative goal-setting

--recognition of good work

--a mutual exchange of specific suggestions for performance improvement

--agreement upon top priority work goals

--clarification of the responsibilities of both the teacher and evaluator

--deliberate effort to correct misinformation

--removal of misunderstandings

--discussion of appropriate long-term goals

Above all, the evaluator must develop skill in the art of listening. Interchanging of ideas is also exceedingly important and necessary. The teacher and evaluator should understand that improvement is a two-way process.

Sometimes a dynamic self-assertive evaluator, who may be highly regarded by his superiors, is often unprepared, ill-equipped, and disinclined to be a "partner" in the evaluation process. On the other hand, this is not to imply that all evaluators must be non-directive counselors. The goal is shared responsibility in the search for better ways to improve performance through evaluation.

The evaluator must be aware of the problems and concerns of the teacher. A sensitivity to conditions that create problems is a quality of the highest importance. It is a form of "preventive maintenance" in evaluation relationships. This does not mean the creation of an unhealthy type of paternalism because teachers resent and object to paternalistic personnel policies and procedures.

What kinds of results can rightfully be expected to result from the process?

1. Clearer perceptions of performance expectations. This process definitely clarifies the scope of the individual's duties and responsibilities. This comes about especially during the needs assessment taken before fixing upon specific performance objectives. When both evaluatee and evaluator survey the former's total job requirements, in relation to areas of expectations, it affords both parties the opportunity to see more clearly the total spectrum of performance expectations. Unless one understands what is expected of him, it is difficult to see how he can wisely determine where efforts should be concentrated to bring about both qualitative and quantitative improvement in performance.

2. Use of feedback to refine performance strategies and procedures. In a very real sense, this is the prime purpose of evaluation. Feedback needs to be used as it becomes available. Periodic progress evaluations, throughout the year, should be used to modify teaching procedures, to alter--where necessary--the performance objectives, and to discard some objectives and replace them with more relevant ones.

3. Availability of more valid performance data. The major emphasis in this type of evaluation is upon collecting, analyzing, and assessing performance information. These data enable both evaluatee and evaluator to be more precise in making judgments and estimates of accomplishment. Hopefully, the more data that is available, the more valid assessments.

The difficulty in most traditional rating procedures is that judgments are made upon insufficient data: performance objectives programs of evaluation reverse this tendency.

4. Reinforced practitioner - supervisor relationships. This approach to evaluation changes the nature of working relations between practitioner and supervisor. The emphasis is upon a partnership, helping relationship. Furthermore, the hesitancy that supervisors generally exhibit in getting actively involved in rating-type evaluation can be removed because the purpose of the process is different. "Educational umpiring," so disliked by supervision, in the context being considered, are compatible--not conflicting--processes. One complements the other. Both have the same purpose; namely, to improve performance.

5. Greater sensitivity to needs and concerns of clients. It has been repeatedly emphasized that in evaluation by objectives, a major emphasis will be upon learning achievements of students. The welfare of the student-client is paramount. Performance objectives will stress what happens to students under the instruction and guidance of the teacher. While objectives may be fixed in other areas, the learner's needs and concerns come first.

6. Stronger emphasis upon improvement. Greater practitioner proficiency is the focus of the evaluation process. While other purposes may be included, they are secondary to the central purpose; namely, improvement. It is in the best interest of the individual being evaluated, the students served, and the

school system's program to put the emphasis upon performance improvement. It makes evaluation a positive rather than a negative process.

7. More adequate documentation of dimensions of incompetency. While the major emphasis is upon improvement, it is not possible to avoid the neccessity, on occasions, to document dimensions of inadequacy of incompetency. Inasmuch as this type of evaluation stresses the importance of early specification of deficiencies in performance plus careful and adequate administrative and supervisory assistance to help the individual overcome the deficiencies, it is possible to do a more thorough job of documentating what happened. Carefully kept records of help provided, data monitored, results achieved, etc. become the documentation that is necessary if and when due process procedures have to be carried out.

Predictions are interesting, but not necessarily useful. Nevertheless, there are some hypotheses that appear reasonable and probable.

1. Additional states - from three to five - will have enacted mandatory statewide programs of evaluation by this time in 1974.

2. Some of these states will adopt competency-based programs, especially if the California experience proves fruitful.

3. Most states will, however, refrain from stipulating precise procedures on a statewide basis, leaving the options open as to rational process and implementation. This will enable local school systems to experiment with various approaches to evaluation.

4. As teachers and other personnel gain peer level participation in the evaluation process it is likely that organizational skepticism and/or hostility may be transformed into receptivity.

5. Collective negotiation complicates the evaluation process, but the two processes can reach an accommodation. The right to evaluate is the prerogative of the board of education and top administration. To be fully involved in evaluation activities is a right which should be guaranteed staff members, by negotiation if necessary.

6. Due process is also a fact of life. Evaluative data are absolutely essential in the implementation of due process. While the prime purpose of evaluation is to improve performance, when the evidence clearly indicates the improvement is not taking place and the prognosis is negative, well-documented evaluative data become indispensable. Greater attention will be given this aspect of the evaluation in the future.

7. Comprehensive evaluation programs will prevail in the future. Leadership personnel will be evaluated as well as teachers - classified as well as certificated.

8. Evaluation will become more important in the list of leadership responsibilities of principals and other administrators. The latter will accommodate themselves to this realignment of job priorities.

In Conclusion

Mandated or voluntary evaluation offer opportunities for the improvement of individuals and the produce of their efforts. The question is - what will educators do with these opportunities?

If we take advantage of the opportunity to make involvement come alive and to design promising new approaches to the process, we stand to reap many benefits. If we merely use the occasion to retread old worn-out procedures by patch-work and cosmetic applications, we will have passed up golden opportunities. The challenge is ours.

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